

communities and our State a wonderful place to live.

Duchesne County captures the best of small town America. Its towns are charming and its people are dedicated and patriotic. I have always enjoyed visiting the many wonderful towns in Duchesne County and getting to know its citizens.

Again, I wish to congratulate Duchesne County on the marking of its centennial. This is a noteworthy time indeed, and I want to wish the many Utahns who call this place home many more years of happiness living and working in this beautiful county.

REMEMBERING ERMA ARVILLA RUPP FRITCHEN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the life of Erma Arvilla Rupp Fritchen. Ms. Fritchen devoted her life to justice, notably as a Freedom Rider in the summer of 1963.

Ms. Fritchen was born and raised in Reno, NV. She strove to be the first in her family to graduate from high school, but nothing was handed to her. Erma worked to pay the rent and still managed to graduate from Reno High School in 1948. Following high school, she pursued adult education classes in psychology before moving to Fort Benning, GA, as a military wife. When she arrived in Fort Benning, she was shocked by the racial disparities in her new city.

After moving back to Nevada, Erma began attending college while also raising her two children on her own. Education and family were important to her, but she was never too busy to take a stand for the principles she believed in. When she had the opportunity to make a difference by joining a civil rights caravan headed for Washington, DC, in 1963, she jumped at the opportunity and added her voice to the Freedom Rider demonstrations that were taking place throughout the country.

Through her years of fighting for justice and equality, Ms. Fritchen proved that everyone can do their part if they work and fight hard enough. I appreciate her dedication to her five sons and contributions to making our country a better place.

RECOGNIZING NEVADA PEP

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Nevada PEP for its more than 20 years of service to children with disabilities and their families.

Nevada PEP was founded more than two decades ago by a handful of families who wanted for their children what every parent wants for their child: the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed in all areas of life, regardless of their ability. Since then, this organization has helped children with disabilities by increasing opportunities for home, community, and school success. Although Nevada PEP started as a small organization with meetings around a kitchen table, the organiza-

tion has now served more than 17,000 people throughout the State and has had a positive impact on many more Nevadans through its greater advocacy efforts.

The “PEP” in the organization’s name has a number of meanings, including, “Parents Encouraging Parents,” “Parents Educating Professionals,” and “Professionals Empowering Parents.” Nevada PEP truly embodies all of these meanings through the services it provides. The organization offers support groups, webinars, and other skill-building activities to help the families of children with disabilities become effective advocates for their child. Nevada PEP also works to connect families to essential community resources, including organizations and professionals in the fields of education, health care, housing, and employment. Additionally, the organization raises awareness and engages the community through events, such as the “Baldy Bash,” the “Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying,” and an annual art show.

I applaud Nevada PEP for their years of dedicated service to children with disabilities and their families. Their work is truly appreciated and admired. I also commend Karen Taycher, a parent and passionate advocate, as well as founding member and the executive director of Nevada PEP, for her fine leadership throughout the past two decades. As Nevada PEP begins the next chapter, I wish them continued success for years to come.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today we celebrate a true milestone in our Nation’s history, and we mark this reminder that basic health insurance is not a privilege for the wealthy, but a right, for every American. On July 30, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Social Security Amendments of 1965 into law, establishing the Medicare and Medicaid programs. For 50 years, these two programs have offered health care and economic security to millions of Americans and their families.

The debate over the right to basic health insurance began in the 1940s with President Harry Truman. At a time when just one in eight seniors had health care and were earning less than \$1000 on average annually, President Truman sought to create a safety net to meet the needs of a growing population. It may be difficult for all of us in the generations of Americans born since that era to fully understand today, but before Medicaid and Medicare, when private health insurers could still discriminate against individuals based on their health, many seniors were either denied coverage entirely or priced out of health insurance. And for Americans living in poverty, health care was simply out of reach.

The Social Security Amendments of 1965 offered a path forward. Today,

Medicare and Medicaid cover a combined 110 million Americans, including seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income Americans and their families. From cancer screenings to hospital coverage, yearly well-visits, flu vaccinations, pediatric dental care and caregiver support, Medicare and Medicaid provide access to the basic health care services that all Americans deserve. And what a dramatic and tangible difference that has made and continues to make in the lives of millions of people.

Through the Affordable Care Act, Medicare and Medicaid took a step further. States that expanded Medicaid under the law saved nearly \$2 billion in health care costs while extending coverage to many, many more Americans. Closing the coverage gap known as the “donut hole” saved seniors on Medicare \$15 billion in health care costs—a savings to seniors of \$28 million in my home State of Vermont alone. The Affordable Care Act strengthened Medicare for future generations, extending the trust fund an additional 13 years as a result of savings to the program.

It is worth remembering as well that in the early years of Medicare and Medicaid, as these programs were established and went through some growing pains, public opinion at first was tentative in supporting these major reforms. Over time, public support for and appreciation of the benefits of these programs has grown significantly. We can see some parallels in the way public opinion about the Affordable Care Act has continued to grow, as its benefits have become more widespread and more apparent in our daily lives.

As we celebrate this important anniversary, I hope we all will remember how far these programs have come and commit to keeping them strong for future generations. Strengthening Medicare and Medicaid is an economic investment in the well-being of our country, and I will fight for these programs for my children and my grandchildren.

I am proud to celebrate an anniversary marking the Federal Government’s promise of providing reassurance and stability for our Nation’s most vulnerable citizens. I look forward to celebrating the success of Medicare and Medicaid for generations to come.

DRIVE ACT

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I am pleased by Senate passage today of the DRIVE Act, a long-overdue, multiyear surface transportation bill to authorize and fund our Nation’s highway, bridge, and transit programs. This bill would provide the certainty needed for State and local planning organizations to set transportation priorities and begin long-term investments to modernize our Nation’s aging infrastructure.

This bill is also a win for the State of Arizona. Included in the DRIVE Act are critical measures, sponsored by

myself and Senator FLAKE, that would pave the way for the establishment of the Sonoran Corridor and the future Interstate 11, I-11, ensuring Arizona has the critical infrastructure it needs to develop significant international trade routes for the Western United States. These provisions would designate the Sonoran Corridor as a future interstate to connect I-19 to I-10 south of the Tucson International Airport and extend the future I-11 through the State of Nevada to I-80 and south toward Arizona's southern border.

As the population in Arizona continues to grow and innovative businesses increasingly settle in our State, we must ensure that we have the infrastructure in place to foster economic development, international trade and job creation. These two top-priority transportation projects will make Arizona a key part of an international trade route that reaches all the way to the southern border. I appreciate Chairman INHOFE's support of these important provisions, as well as Senator FLAKE, Governor Doug Ducey and leaders from across the State of Arizona for their strong partnership in advancing these designations that will connect Arizona businesses and communities to major domestic and international trade partners.

I am proud of the bipartisan effort that went into this bill. It is unfortunate that we ultimately had to pass yet another short-term highway extension today to avoid a transportation shutdown across the country. This stop-gap measure should be the last. When we return following the August break, I urge the House to take up and pass this bill and send it to the President's desk for signature.

REBUILD ACT

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I join with my House colleague from Baltimore, Congressman ELLIAH CUMMINGS, to introduce the REBUILD Act. The people who live in our most distressed neighborhoods deserve a government on their side—one that works as hard for them as they work for their own families and communities. This bill is about rehabilitating neighborhoods, making them healthier and safer, and creating jobs today and jobs tomorrow for communities that need it most. By supporting small businesses, rebuilding infrastructure, expanding opportunity for our young people and tackling crime, we will lay the foundation for a brighter future.

The REBUILD Act is an emergency supplemental bill for fiscal year 2015 to help inner-city neighborhoods across the United States. It focuses on four key areas: physical infrastructure, meeting compelling human needs, community safety, and assistance to small business owners.

This bill provides robust funding for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development programs that will remove blight, rehabilitate aging housing

properties, including those with lead paint, and fund youth and senior centers. I especially want to highlight the Community Development Block Grant funding to help those communities most impacted by violence and civil unrest this year. That includes my hometown of Baltimore. This bill also extends the moving-to-work contracts through 2028.

For meeting compelling human needs, this bill funds U.S. Department of Labor's job training and apprenticeship programs to help dislocated workers, veterans and youth make a living wage and learn new job skills. It also funds the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy Start Initiative. This program helps moms and infants get access to primary and preventative health care to reduce infant mortality rates.

In the area of community safety, there is significant funding for targeted U.S. Department of Justice grant programs. This funding will help reduce youth violence, tackle crime hot spots controlled by gangs and rampant with gun violence, and reduce methamphetamine and heroin trafficking. There is additional funding for drug, mental health and veterans courts to break the cycle of drug use and criminal behavior.

For our small business owners and entrepreneurs, this bill provides loans, grants, training and counseling services. There also is money to help underserved businesses with Federal contracting.

Recent events like the riots in Baltimore remind us of the unmet needs of our Nation's inner city neighborhoods. We must do more. This means immediately getting to work on a sequel to the landmark Murray-Ryan budget deal to replace sequester. The impact of the status quo and deep cuts to our Federal programs on the mission to lift up these communities is unacceptable. The opportunity of the American Dream should be within every American's reach.

VETERAN HOUSING STABILITY ACT OF 2015

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, yesterday, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I introduced S. 1885, the Veteran Housing Stability Act of 2015. I would like to thank Senators SANDERS, BROWN, and HIRONO for joining me to introduce this bill, and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans and the National Alliance to End Homelessness for their support of this legislation. At a time when the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, has taken on an aggressive initiative to end homelessness among veterans by the end of 2015, much progress has been made yet there is still more progress needed.

The VA initiative has led to a 33 percent decrease in the homeless veteran population since 2010. These declining numbers are a reflection of the com-

bined efforts of VA and its Federal, State, local, tribal, and community partners as they continue aggressive efforts to decrease veteran homelessness and implement a system through which veterans who become homeless can be rapidly placed in appropriate housing situations that meet their needs. The statistics are staggering—49,000 veterans are homeless in America today, 1 in 10 of all homeless men and women—a searing failure in the greatest, strongest Nation in the world's history. It reflects a failure to keep faith that this legislation will help correct. We cannot allow another veteran to slip through the cracks. We must give communities the flexibility and tools they need to create housing systems that can maximize existing resources collaboratively in order to identify and sustain appropriate housing placements for vulnerable veterans.

The legislation would reaffirm this Nation's commitment to safe and affordable housing for veterans by improving and expanding upon VA's programs to prevent and end homelessness among veterans. VA's housing programs for homeless and at-risk veterans must modernize to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the very veterans they are intended to serve. One of the challenges many identify as causing difficulty is one that mainstream housing programs also struggle with—insufficient availability of safe, affordable, permanent housing options.

This measure will address the egregious, abhorrent problem of veteran homelessness with several common-sense, effective steps to increase housing for homeless and at-risk veterans. The Homeless Veterans Prevention Act of 2015 would expand access to housing by requiring VA to collaborate with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and other entities to conduct more robust landlord outreach and encourage more landlords to rent to veterans.

Further, this bill would modify a VA program that provides critical savings to transitional housing providers, allowing these groups to spend limited funding to provide high-quality services rather than to retire the debt they would take on to acquire a facility in which to operate. VBA's Acquired Property Sales for Homeless Providers Program sells homes from VA's foreclosure inventory at a discount to non-profit organizations for use as transitional housing for homeless veterans. As VA continues to shift its homeless programs into an approach that meets veterans at their point of need, rather than choosing a one-size-fits-all solution, more services are being provided under the housing-first model, which pairs housing with appropriate levels of case management. This pairing allows veterans to deal with the underlying issues that caused homelessness, rather than attempting to work through them while simultaneously looking for housing. It is critical that programs that offer more than transitional housing be